

Resources & Tips for Working with African American Churches

How to Use Resources & Tips

Resources & Tips directs public health nutrition professionals to programs and resources for the African American faith-based population.

What you will find

It tells you how and where to make contact - the setting, provides background, insight, cultural considerations and an array of resources and references. The resources are organized around:

- Programs and interventions
- Material resources for the consumer
- Material resources for the professional
- Key partners
- Funding sources
- References



Target Population

Churches with a predominately African American membership. These churches may belong to historically African American denominations, other denominations, or be independent. This fact sheet is limited to Christian organizations as there has been limited research with other faiths.

Background

African Americans have a higher risk for almost all diet related diseases compared to whites, including, high blood pressure, type II diabetes, obesity and cancer. African Americans also have the lowest fruit and vegetable consumption among all ethnic groups.

Working with the African American faith community has been shown to be an effective way to address health disparities. A number of studies have been published showing that interventions conducted through African American churches are effective at increasing fruit and vegetable consumption (see references).

Key cultural considerations when working with African American churches include:

- Understand the church hierarchy. Anything that goes on in the church needs the approval and support of the pastor.
- Respect sacred times and places. The primary mission of the church is spiritual. Church leadership will provide guidance about when and where it is appropriate to discuss health.
- Observe proper dress and etiquette when working with church leaders.

Settings

An important step in reaching African American church members is engaging their leadership. Most denominations have state and regional conferences that hold regular meetings. The major African American Christian denominations are:

- The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)
- The African Methodist Episcopal Zion
- The Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME)
- The Church of God in Christ (COGIC)
- Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship
- The Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC)
- National Baptist Convention of America
- The National Baptist Convention USA

Other organizations of African American congregations include the Union of Black Episcopalians, the National Black Catholic Congress.

African American clergy are also often members of interfaith alliances and coalitions.

RESOURCES		
Programs and Interventions		
RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE/SOURCE
Body & Soul: A Celebration of Healthy Eating and Living	A healthy eating program for churches that combines pastoral support, church wide activities, a church environment that supports healthy eating and peer counseling.	From NCI, call 1-800-4-CANCER
Eat For Life	A church-based intervention using motivational interviewing to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among African Americans	http://www.cancercontrolplanet.gov
The North Carolina Black Churches United for Better Health Program	A multi-component intervention using an ecological framework. Targets individual, social network and community levels.	http://www.cancercontrolplant.gov
Project Power	Developed by American Diabetes Assoc. for churches. The program integrates diabetes awareness messages and healthy living tips into life of the family and church.	http://www.diabetes.org or call 1-888-DIABETES
Search Your Heart	Heart health and stroke prevention emphasizes diet, physical activity and tobacco use and prevention	http://www.americanheart.org or call 1800-AHA-1-USA
Live Healthy In Faith – A Faith Community Guide to Promoting Nutrition and Physical Activity	A non-denominational guide that addresses the connection between faith and health. How to establish a wellness cabinet, evidenced-base health programs, and conduct monthly health observances	http://www.district4health.org/pdf/faithbased%20toolkit.pdf
The Fruit of the Spirit Curriculum	Christian education curriculum that can be adapted to also teach nutrition.	In Celebration: The Complete Christian Educators Catalog by McGraw Hill Children's Publishing, 251 Jefferson St. M.S #12 Waldoboro, ME 04572 Phone: 1-800-417-3261 Fax: 1-888-203-9361

Resources for Target Population - Print

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE/SOURCE
A Taste of 5 A Day Cookbook	A collection of Official 5 A Day for Better Health Recipes by church members participating in the Black Churches United for Better Health Project.	http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com or order from North Carolina Department of Health
Up Where We Belong	A personal guide to promote healthful eating by helping you eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Appropriate to use	http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com or order from North Carolina Department of Health
Other consumer web based resources	A variety of appropriate nutrition education materials	http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov or www.health-e-ame.com
Resources for Professionals (May cost \$\$)		
Eating Smart and Moving More for African American Churches Resource Guide	Program resource guide.	Contact Diane Beth at diane.beth@ncmail.net
Working with Religious Congregations: A Guide for Health Professionals	This guide builds on lessons learned from church-based demonstration programs supported by NHLBI. It includes contact, recruiting, training volunteer teams, implementing effective CVD prevention programs, and sustaining, monitoring and evaluation of congregation-based programs. (32 pages)	NIH Publication Number: 97-4058 Available online at http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Key Partners

- The American Cancer Society promotes Body & Soul
- American Heart Association produces Search Your Heart programs for African American congregations.
- The extension service can provide educational programs for congregations.
- Community supermarkets and hospitals make good partners for churches implementing health program.
- African American newspapers and gospel radio are also good ways to reach the target audience.

Funding Sources

The Department of Health and Human Services Center for Faith Based and Community Initiatives maintains a list of funding opportunities for faith based initiatives at <http://www.dhhs.gov/fbci/>.

References

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